Australian Bureau of Statistics

Insights into casual employment, occupation and industry

Released 23/12/2020

Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, November 2020

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As outlined in Insights into hours worked, (/articles/insights-hours-worked-november-2020) hours worked increased by 2.5% in November, following smaller increases in both September (0.2%) and October (1.2%). Since the low point in May, total hours worked has increased by 159.8 million hours, recovering 86% of the 185.6 million hour decrease between March and May.

In November, hours worked was 1.5% lower than March, and employment was 1.1% lower than March.

As shown in Insights into Industry and Occupation (/articles/insights-industry-and-occupation) , when May data was released, the early impacts of COVID-19 were particularly evident in service based jobs, such as the Community and service workers and Sales workers occupations, and Arts and recreation services and Accommodation and food services industries. These are jobs often performed by casual workers.

Casual employment

Casual workers accounted for around two-thirds of people who lost a job early in the COVID-19 period (see Characteristics of employment media release (https://www.abs.gov.au

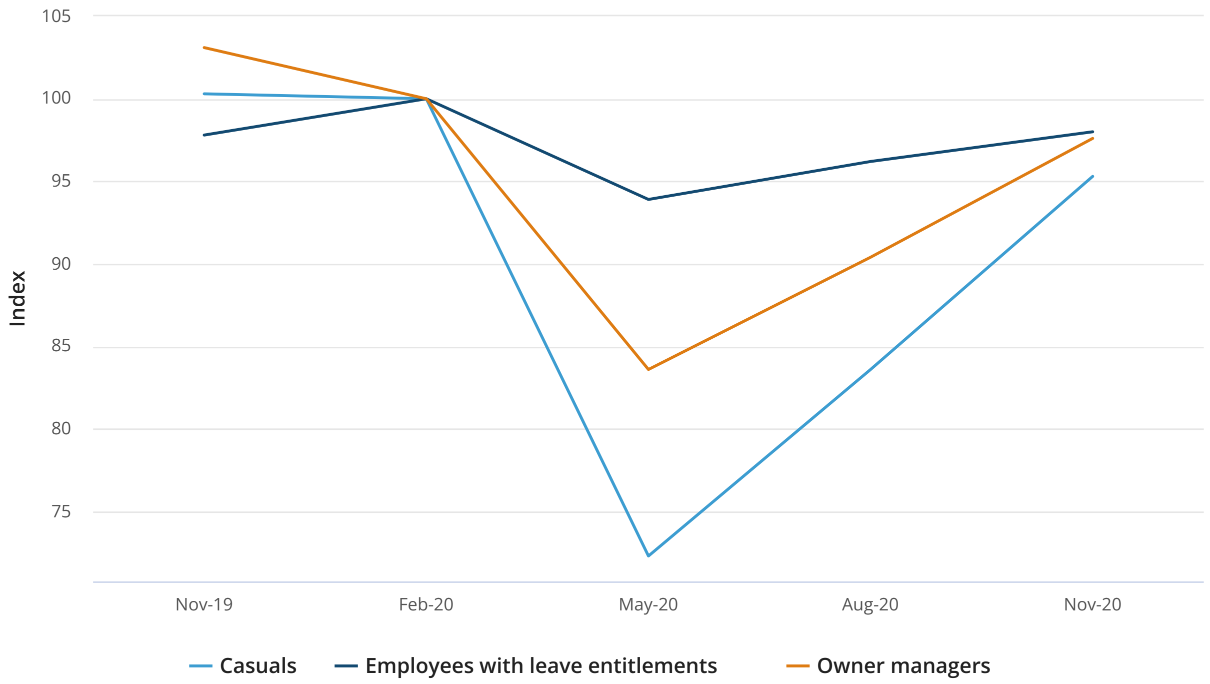
/media-centre/media-releases/casuals-hardest-hit-job-losses-2020) and Working arrangements (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/working-arrangements /aug-2020)). The number of casual employees fell from 2.6 million to 2.1 million between February and May, before increasing to 2.3 million in August and then to 2.5 million in November.

Prior to the COVID period, casuals accounted for 20% of employed people (and around 25% of employees). This fell to around 17% of employed people in May. In November, 19% of employed people were casual employees.

Chart 1 compares the change in hours worked for casuals with non-casual employees (i.e. those with leave entitlements) and owner managers, indexed to February 2020. Its shows that the hours of casual employees, and to a lesser extent owner managers, were more impacted by COVID-19, with the total hours worked by casuals decreasing by almost 28% and the total hours worked of owner managers decreasing by over 16%. In contrast, the hours worked by non-casual employees decreased by 6.1% over the same period.

In November, total hours worked by casuals was 95.3% of the hours worked by casuals in February, while for owner managers it was 97.6% and for non-casual employees it was 98.0%.

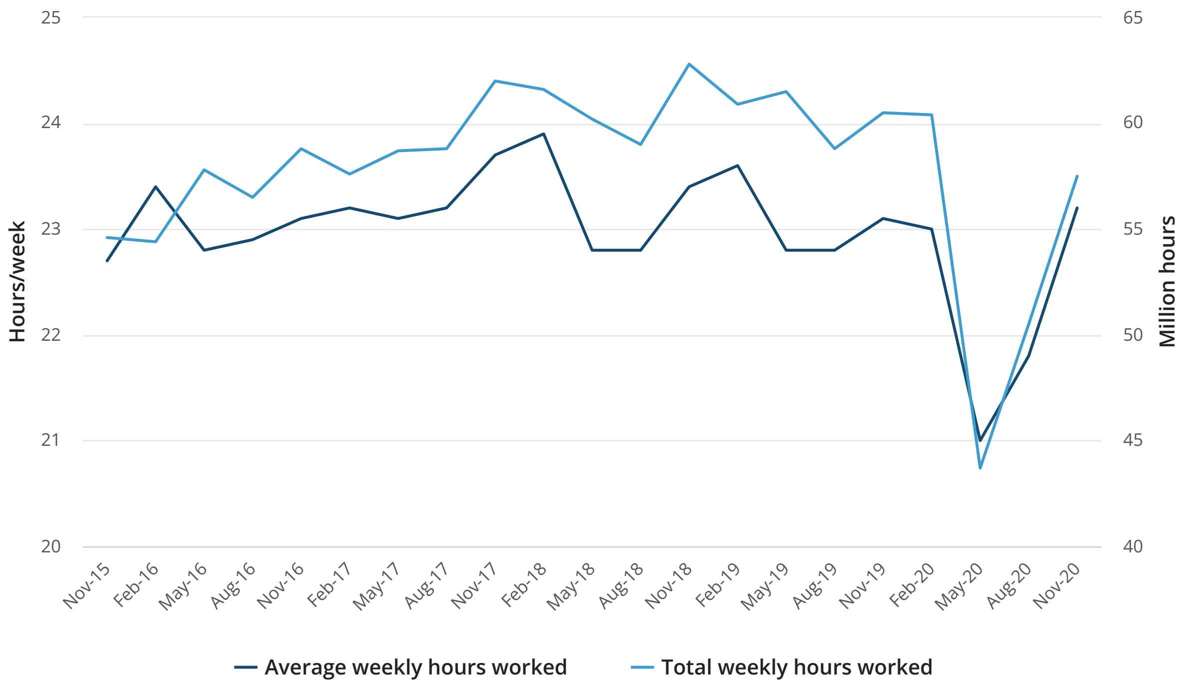
Chart 1: Hours worked index, Status in Employment, Original (Feb 2020 = 100.0)



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Datacube EQ04

Chart 2 shows the impact of COVID-19 on the working hours of casual employees, with both the total number of weekly hours worked by all casual employees, and the average weekly hours worked by casual employees, falling considerably between February and May, before rebounding in August and into November.

Chart 2: Hours worked by casual employees, Original

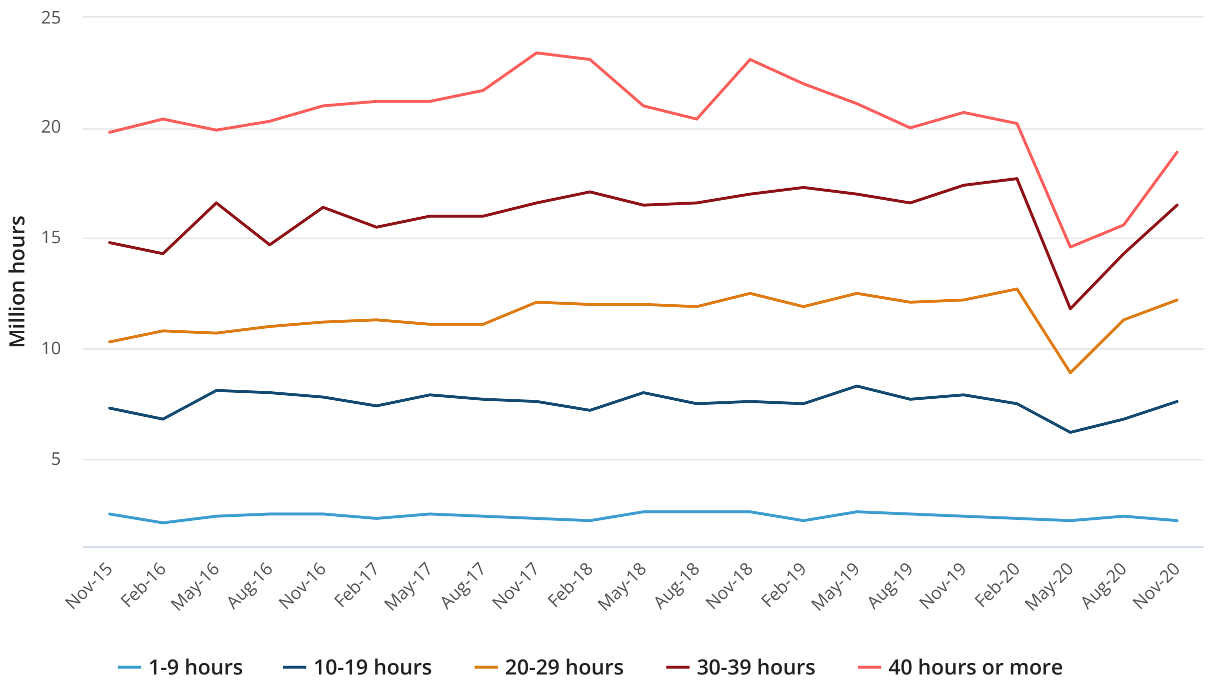


Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 13 and Datacube EQ04

Chart 3 shows the total weekly hours worked by casual employees across the various weekly hours worked categories. Between February and May, the total number of weekly hours worked by people working 30-39 hours or 40 hours or more had the largest decreases, reflecting a large decrease in the number of casual employees working these hours.

The proportion of all casual employees working 30-39 hours or 40 hours or more per week also declined between February and May, while the proportion working 1-9 hours or 10-19 hours (or no hours) increased. Compositionally, the 10-19 and 20-29 weekly hours categories have the highest proportion of casual employees.

Chart 3: Total hours worked, by hours worked ranges, Casual employees, Original



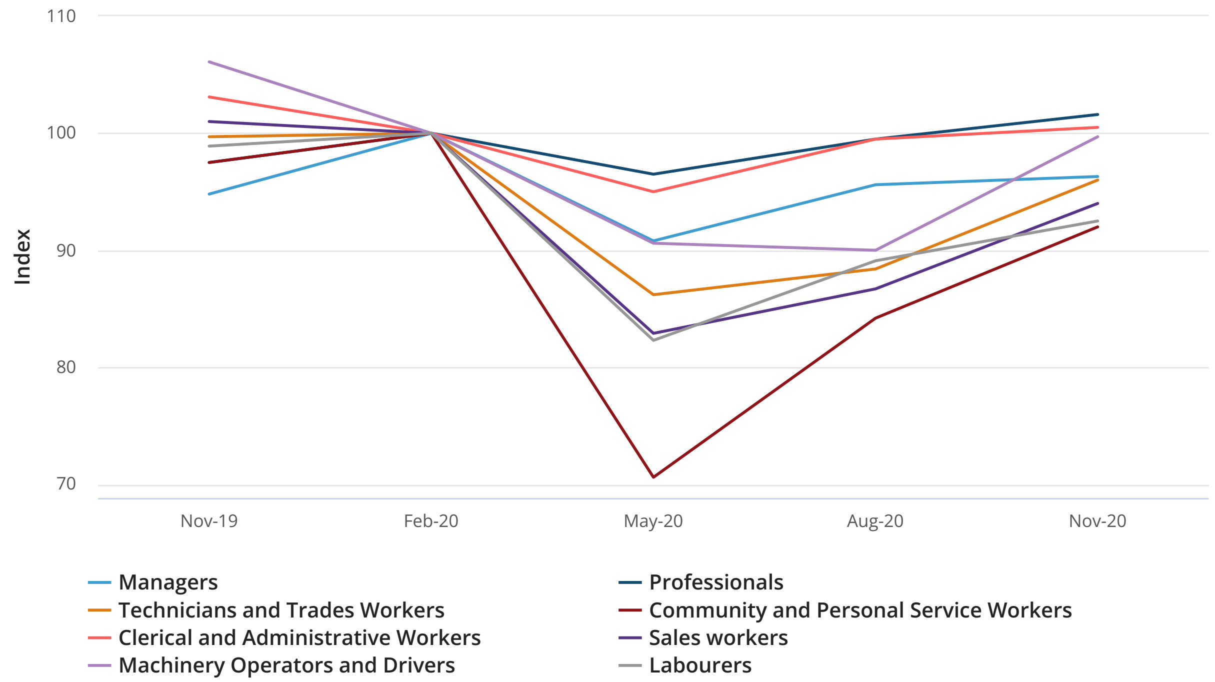
Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Datacube EQ04

Occupation

Chart 4 shows the change in hours worked for occupations since February, as an index. The occupations that recorded large falls between February and May have generally recorded strong increases between either May and August or August and November.

The hours worked by Professionals and Clerical and administrative workers are now higher than February 2020 (by 1.6% and 0.5% respectively). In contrast the hours of Community and personal service workers, which have increased considerably following the near 30% drop in May, are still 8.0% lower than February.

Chart 4: Hours worked index, Occupations, Original (Feb 2020 = 100.0)



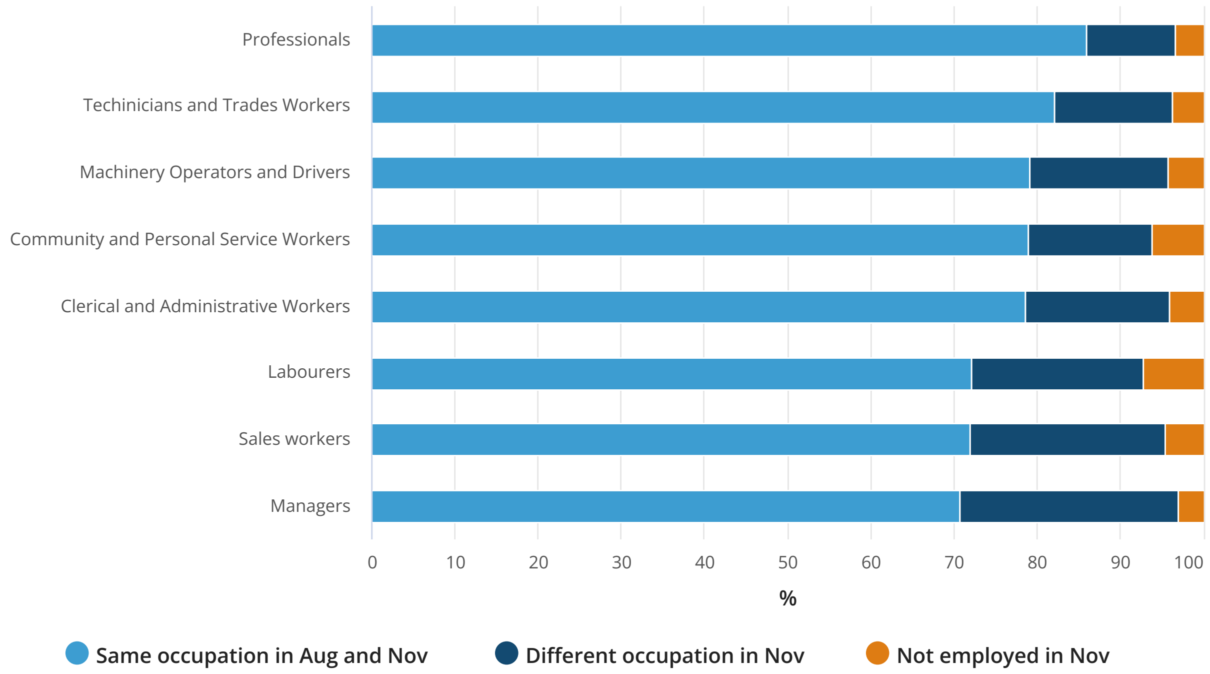
Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 12

Chart 5 shows, for people employed in each occupation in August, the proportion who were:

- still employed in the same occupation in November;
- still employed in November but in a different occupation; or
- no longer employed in November.

The proportion of people remaining in the same occupation between August and November was generally higher than seen between February and May. There was also generally higher occupational mobility in November compared with May, and a lower prevalence of people moving out of employment in all occupation groups. The occupational flows in November 2020 were similar to those in November 2019.

Chart 5: Whether remained employed in November, by Occupation in August, Original

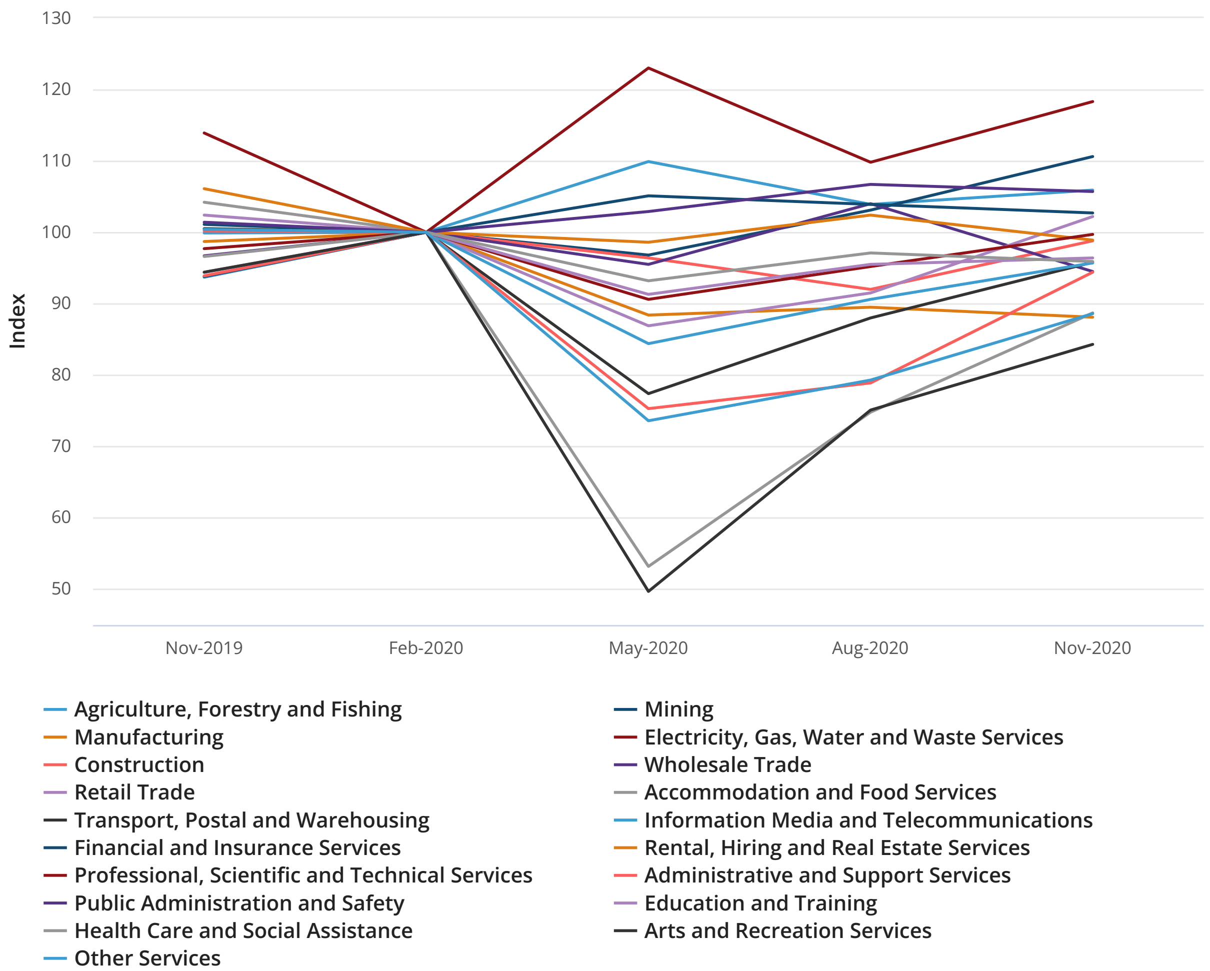


Source: Longitudinal Labour Force Microdata

Industry

Chart 6 show the change in hours worked for industries since February, as an index, highlighting the differences in both the extent and timing of impacts from COVID-19 across the different industries. The industries that recorded large falls between February and May have generally recorded strong increases between either May and August or August and November. While hours worked in Arts and recreation services and Accommodation and food services have rebounded strongly following there around 50% decrease in May, they are still well below February levels.

Chart 6: Hours worked index, Industries, Original (Feb 2020 = 100.0)



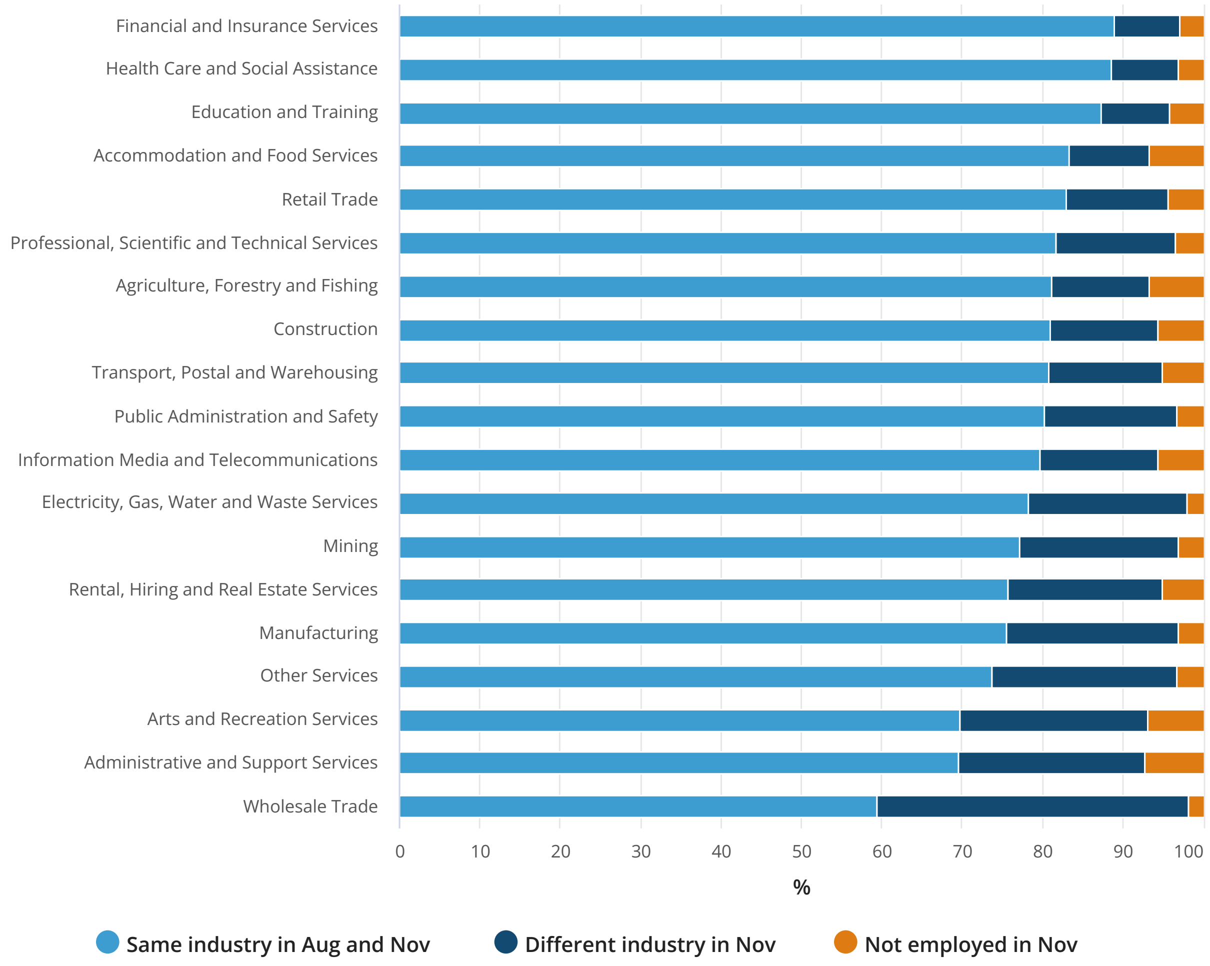
Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Datacube EQ11

Chart 7 shows, for people employed in each industry in August, the proportion who were:

- still employed in the same industry in November;
- still employed in November but in a different industry; or
- no longer employed in November.

As with occupation, the industry flows in November 2020 were similar to those in November 2019.

Chart 7: Whether remained employed in November, by Industry in August, Original



Source: Longitudinal Labour Force Microdata

For further information, email [labour.statistics@abs.gov.au (mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au)](mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au).